

## Asbestos removal awaits at Webster mill fire site



Firefighters start rolling up hoses June 26 after a 7-alarm at the former Anglo Fabrics mill on Pearl Street in Webster. T&G File Photo/Paul Kapteyn

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WEBSTER - After more than a month, a massive amount of rubble from a seven-alarm mill fire remains on the ground as officials await a state-approved asbestos abatement plan.

The raging inferno at the two buildings at 35 Pearl St. occurred June 25.

Property owner 35 Pearl Street LLC has retained the services of consultant Smith and Wessel of Spencer, which submitted its asbestos abatement plan to the state Department of Environmental Protection a few weeks ago, DEP spokesman Joseph Ferson said Thursday.

The DEP has since made revisions to the plan, and sent it back to Smith and Wessel and the property owner.

“We’re still working on that, working with them to get that final plan approved,” Mr. Ferson said.

He said he did not have a timetable for its completion.

Meanwhile, the site is secure, and air testing was conducted on the perimeter of the site. There’s no indication of any asbestos in the air, Mr. Ferson said, noting there’s a railroad line on one side of the site, and fencing around the other three sides.

Asbestos, a human carcinogen, is a naturally occurring, mostly fibrous mineral and it may consist of any one of a number of silicates, according to the state office of Energy and Environmental Affairs website.

Asbestos is used in a variety of products because of physical properties that make it resistant to heat, fire and many caustic chemicals. Asbestos has been used extensively as fireproofing, an insulating agent, and for decorative purposes, among many other uses.

In Massachusetts, it is required that asbestos be removed prior to a demolition, and it is “strongly recommended” that only workers certified by the Department of Labor Standards do asbestos handling on behalf of homeowners, because asbestos fibers pose a serious health threat, according to the state.

Asbestos is classified as “special waste” that has to be thoroughly wetted, properly packaged and labeled before it be disposed of in a Massachusetts landfill that is specifically permitted by the DEP to accept asbestos-containing waste materials.

The Fitchburg/Westminster Landfill in Westminster accepts asbestos waste. It may also be trucked to accepted out-of-state facilities.

At its meeting Monday night, the Webster Board of Health is scheduled to discuss the Mill Street property.

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